



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

21 January 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Matthew O'Toole MLA (Chairperson)

Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Jemma Dolan MLA

Deirdre Hargey MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

Brian Kingston MLA

Eoin Tennyson MLA

Apologies: None

Virtual: Gerry Carroll MLA

In Attendance: Peter Hall Committee Clerk

Fiona Rooney Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk

Clairita Frazer Assistant Assembly Clerk

Tom Armstrong Assistant Assembly Clerk

Stephen Magee Clerical Supervisor

Heather Graham Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2:04pm in public session.

1. Apologies.

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests.

None.

3. Chairperson's Business.

3.1. The Executive Office – Urgent Written Statement – Publication of the Executive 3rd Response to the Covid-19 Module 1 Report Recommendations

The Committee noted an Urgent Written Statement from the Executive Office, updating the NI Assembly on the NI Executive's continued response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report and implementation of the recommendations.

4. Draft Minutes of Proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of Proceedings from the meeting of the 14 January 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. Department of Finance – Legislative Consent Motion Tracker

The Committee noted an updated copy of the Departmental Legislative Consent Motion tracker.

5.2. DALO Extract – Meeting 19 November 2025

The Committee noted a DALO Extract from the meeting on 19th November 2025.

5.3. DALO Readout Response – Local Growth Fund

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Finance providing written briefing on progress and work to expedite the development of the Local Growth Fund, including a readout of the meeting on 22nd October 2025 between the Finance Minister and Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Members noted that a response from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was awaited.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if it is aware of any assessments undertaken by individual Ministers and Departments on the impact on front-line services due to the continued delay in establishing the Local Growth Fund.

5.4. House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee – Correspondence to Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury

The Committee considered a response from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee to the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury regarding Council Directives on tobacco and related products.

Steve Aiken and Eoin Tennyson declared interests as Members of the Windsor Framework and Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the correspondence to the Justice Committee.

5.5. Financial Secretary to the Treasury – Correspondence to NI Scrutiny Committee

The Committee noted correspondence from Financial Secretary to the Treasury to the Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding the Trader Support Service.

5.6. Department of Finance – 2025-26 Spring Supplementary Estimates Memorandum

The Committee considered a copy of the Department of Finance's 2025-26 Spring Supplementary Estimates.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department of Finance on when the Westminster Supplementary Estimates were expected and if there would be any corresponding impact on funding for the NI Executive.

5.7. Committee for the Executive Office – Reserve Claims for those affected by Mother & Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses

The Committee considered correspondence from the Executive Office Committee regarding Reserve Claims for those affected by Mother & Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Finance if it was still pressing for a Reserve Claim given that funding requirements for a Redress Scheme had been factored into the multi-year budget for 2026-2029/30.

5.8. Construction Employers Federation (CEF) – Press Release – Infrastructure Levy

The Committee noted a press release from CEF outlining updated figures for the Infrastructure Levy proposed by CEF, NI Chamber and NIFHA.

5.9. Publication of draft Schedule of Values for Reval 26

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding the publication of draft Schedule of Values for Reval 26, pending an oral briefing from LPS officials at next week's meeting.

6. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Oral Briefing with Department of Infrastructure Officials

The Committee noted a number of papers provided to assist with the briefing. Members also noted that the Department of Infrastructure has responsibility for Clause 17 in the Bill relating to Travel Concession Passes and that the Infrastructure Committee had completed its scrutiny on the Clause and had a preference for delegated legislation under Clause 17 to come before the Assembly by the Affirmative Resolution Procedure.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:30pm;

Brenda Burke	Director of Transport Regulation and Public Transport Policy
Linda Buick	Head of Public Transport Strategy Branch; and
Maryclaire McCullough	Public Transport Strategy Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on the contents of Clause 17 of the Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. A number of issues were discussed including the move to an online application process, total administrative cost of the concession scheme, potential exemptions for charging, and potential for sharing of resources to verify identity.

Members noted an assurance from officials that the Infrastructure Minister was content to adapt Affirmative Resolution for the power proposed in Clause 17 of the Bill.

Steve Aiken declared an interest as a holder of a SmartPass.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Infrastructure Minister to request additional information on a number of points including information on modelling for different costs, how concessions may work and for clarification on who would bring the necessary amendment to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the Hansard Transcript from the oral briefing to the Infrastructure Committee.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 3:18pm.

The Committee suspended at 3:18pm.

The Committee reconvened at 3:26pm.

7. Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill – Oral Briefing with Executive Office Officials

The Committee noted a number of papers provided to assist with the briefing. Members also noted that the Executive Office has responsibility for 6 Clauses in the Bill support service for victims and survivors (Clause 6), Asylum and Immigration Integration Support Services (Clause 7), Public Appointments (Clause 8), Ending Violence against women and girls (Clause 9), Supplementary (Clause 10) and Discretion as to a particular Commissioner's Term of Office (Clause 14). Members also noted that the Executive Office Committee had completed its scrutiny on the relevant Clauses.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:26pm;

Gavin King Grade 5 Victims & Survivors Division; and

Ronan Murtagh Grade 5 Finance Division.

The officials briefed the Committee on the contents of relevant Clauses of the Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the Hansard Transcript from the oral briefing to the Executive Office Committee.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:14pm.

8. Public Procurement Reform/Ports Exemption/Procurement Amendment Regulations 2026 – Oral Briefing from Department of Finance Officials

The Committee noted a number of papers provided by the Department of Finance in advance of today's briefing including correspondence on the Procurement Amendment Regulations, a briefing paper on the Cabinet Office Proposals for Public Procurement Reform, a briefing paper on a Possible Exemption of Ports from Procurement Legislation. Members also noted the Explanatory Memorandum from the Procurement Act 2023.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:15pm;

Sharon Smyth Deputy Secretary Construction Procurement Delivery;
and

Paul Browne Deputy Director of Policy and Performance.

The officials briefed the Committee on the recent developments related to public procurement and future legislative change.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek progress updates on related issues. Members also agreed to copy the Hansard Transcript on the briefing to the Infrastructure Committee.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance, and the officials left the meeting at 4:34pm.

9. LCM - The Public Office (Accountability) Bill – Consideration of Committee Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Hansard would provide a transcript of the agenda item.

The Committee considered a further DALO readout response from the Department of Finance reflecting Departmental responses to engagement with stakeholders and level of risk for the LCM as referenced in an Executive paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session for deliberations in respect of the LCM.

The Committee moved into closed session at 4:35pm.

Eoin Tennyson left the meeting at 4:40pm.

The Committee returned to open session at 4:50pm.

Members noted that the Department of Finance had laid a Legislative Consent Memorandum under SO42A(4)(a)) with a draft motion seeking the Assembly's consent for the Public Office (Accountability) Bill – excluding part 4 – to legislate on behalf of the Executive/Department in what are devolved areas.

The Committee considered its position in respect of the LCM.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position in relation to the Department of Finance's proposal to extend the provisions in the Public Office (Accountability) Bill (excluding Part 4) to Northern Ireland by way of a Legislative Consent Motion. Members also agreed to continue publishing information received as addenda to the Committee Report to provide the Assembly with as much detail as possible on which to base its decision.

The Committee considered a draft report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the provisions in the Public Office (Accountability) Bill (excluding Part 4) to be extended to Northern Ireland and the Legislative Consent Motion to be brought forward by the Minister of Finance. The Committee's consideration was as follows:

Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page

The Committee considered the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page.

Background

The Committee considered the Background section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Background section of the report.

Purpose of the Legislative Consent Motion

The Committee considered the Purpose of the Legislative Consent Motion section of the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Purpose of the Legislative Consent Motion section of the report as drafted.

Committee Consideration of the Legislative Consent Motion

The Committee considered the Committee Consideration of the Legislative Consent Motion section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Committee Consideration of the Legislative Consent Motion section of the report as amended and agreed by Members.

Conclusion

The Committee considered the Conclusion section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Conclusion section of the report as drafted.

Appendices

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Minutes of Proceedings of this meeting (21 January 2026) to be added to Appendix 2 when agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Minutes of Evidence from today's meeting (21 January 2026) to be added to Appendix 3 when agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Report on LCM – Public Office (Accountability) Bill Legislative Consent Memorandum to be published and issued to all Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would write to the Speaker, copied to the Procedures Committee regarding timescales for LCM consideration under Standing Order 42(A).

10. NI Fiscal Council Bill – Committee Deliberations

The Committee considered correspondence from the NI Audit Office on the provisions within the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the response to the Evidence base for the Committee Stage of the Bill. The Committee also agreed to schedule an oral briefing with the NI Audit Office on 4th February 2026.

The Committee noted a response from the Treasury Committee regarding its interaction and engagement with the Office of Budget Responsibility.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the response to the Evidence base for the Committee Stage of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy correspondence from the Scottish Finance Public Accounts Committee regarding the Bill to the Department of Finance.

Before moving to consideration of agenda items 11 and 12, the Committee noted the new process now in place for Committee consideration of Delegated Legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following:

to issue a call for views for each SL1, using the standard survey, and to publish the SL1, the draft SR and any relevant documents from the Department on the Committee website;

that Committee staff seek information from the Department, where necessary, on any matters raised during each SL1 stage, including in the survey. All information provided by the Department will be provided to the Committee to inform its decision-making on the proposal; and

to publish any responses received to the Committee survey for each SL1, after they have been considered by the Committee.

Eoin Tennyson returned to the meeting at 5:00pm.

11. The Pensions Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee noted that the Department of Finance proposes to make a statutory rule: The Pension Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 which will fulfil the Department of Finance's obligation to provide, by Order, for an increase of 3.8% in the rates of Northern Ireland Public Service Pensions in payment and deferred pensions, with effect from 6 April 2026. Members noted that the Department of Finance had submitted a SL1 letter, including details of policy screening, a draft statutory rule and draft explanatory memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note receipt of the SL1 and proposed statutory rule and that these will be published as part of the call for views on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the SL1 at its meeting on 18th February 2026.

12. The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee noted that the Department of Finance proposes to make a statutory rule: The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 which will provide, by Order, for an increase to be used by career average revalued

earnings (CARE) public service pension schemes for the purpose of revaluing active members' pension benefits. Members noted that the Department of Finance had submitted a SL1 letter, including details of policy screening, a draft statutory rule and draft explanatory memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note receipt of the SL1 and proposed statutory rule and that these will be published as part of the call for views on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the SL1 at its meeting on 18th February 2026.

13. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the 53rd Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly and the appropriate Committees; and
- ii. The Committee noted a report on the Youth Assembly's Big Youth Survey.

14. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and noted a number of upcoming items including a potential visit to Integr8 after Easter, written and oral briefings on the Census Consultation, an oral briefing on the Review of ALBs and final Departmental briefings on the NI Fiscal Council and Administrative and Financial Provisions Bills.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the items to the Forward Work Programme as discussed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Forward Work Programme should be published on the Committee webpages.

Members noted the Chairperson's apologies for next week's meeting and that the deputy Chairperson, Diane Forsythe would chair the meeting.

15. Any Other Business

None.

16. Date and Time of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 28th January 2026 at 1:00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.

Diane Forsythe

Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Finance

28 January 2026